



Alignment of the Texas Adult Education and Literacy ESL Content Standards to the Global Scale of English – An Overview

OCTOBER 2025



Contents

About the GSE.....	3
About the Texas AEL Standards	5
Alignment Methodology & Results	6
Sample Alignments.....	8

About the GSE

Pearson developed the Global Scale of English (GSE) to provide instructors and learners with a more granular understanding of English language proficiency. It has been designed to build learners' confidence by revealing exactly where they are on their learning journey and setting personalised goals to help them progress.

The GSE is an ecosystem that underpins the Pearson English Journey:

- **GSE Scale:** a proficiency scale from 10 to 90, with clear statements for what a learner can achieve in speaking, listening, reading, and writing at any point on the scale.
- **GSE Learning Objectives:** descriptions of what learners can do at each level of proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing.
- **Courseware:** all of Pearson's English language learning courseware is developed using the GSE Learning Objectives.
- **Assessment:** institutions can develop their own assessment materials using the GSE Learning Objectives and Assessment Frameworks or choose one of Pearson's digital assessments which report on the GSE.

The GSE is the result of many years of research with more than 6,000 teachers from over 50 countries. It serves as a standard against which English language courses and assessments worldwide can be benchmarked.

It has been psychometrically aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference or CEFR (see De Jong, Mayor, & Hayes, 2016). The GSE complements and extends the CEFR by adding an extra layer of detail to the CEFR levels and providing thousands of additional learning objectives. This extra information helps learners understand where they are now and offers a step-by-step guide to where they want to go next. Using the GSE, teachers can match a student to course materials to suit their exact level and learning goals.

CEFR level	GSE Scale
Below A1	10–21
A1	22–29
A2	30–35
A2+	36–42
B1	43–50
B1+	51–58
B2	59–66
B2+	67–75
C1	76–84
C2	85–90

Table 1: The relationship between the GSE Scale and the CEFR

To address the specific needs of learners studying English for different purposes, GSE Learning Objectives have been developed for five different learner audiences:

- **adult:** adults studying on a general English course
- **academic:** adults studying academic English
- **professional:** adults studying English for the workplace
- **young learner:** English language learners aged 6–14
- **pre-primary:** English language learners aged 3–5

For more information:

[pearson.com/languages/why-pearson/the-global-scale-of-english](https://www.pearson.com/languages/why-pearson/the-global-scale-of-english)

About the Texas Adult Education and Literacy ESL Content Standards

The Texas Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) Content Standards provide a structured framework to guide instruction for adult learners in six broad content areas: I – English Language Arts (ELA), II – Mathematics, III – English as a Second Language (ESL), IV – Parent/Family, V – Civics and VI – Digital Literacy. These standards ensure that adult learners in Texas acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for success in postsecondary education, workforce training, employment, and civic life.

The Texas AEL's ESL content area is organized into four overarching standards for Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Each of these is further broken down into more detailed sub-area standard descriptions, exemplified with detailed work activities taken from the [O*NET database](#) to contextualize learning with an industry focus. Benchmarks are aligned to the overarching content standards and organized into six proficiency levels from beginning to advanced language ability, with reference to the National Reporting System's (NRS 2018) six performance levels.

Educators are encouraged to use the Texas AEL's ESL standards to design curriculum, instruction, and assessments that build toward mastery of English skills. While the standards define what learners should know and be able to do, they remain flexible and do not prescribe specific teaching methods, allowing instructors to adapt them to local contexts and learner needs.

The full Texas AEL Content standards can be found here: [Texas Adult Education and Literacy Content Standards v. 4](#)

Alignment Methodology & Results

The alignment process consisted of two steps. First, the benchmarks for each ESL Content Standard were mapped to one or more best-fit GSE Learning Objectives. GSE Adult Learner and Professional Learner sets were used as the primary reference, unless an Academic objective was deemed more suitable. A representative example is provided in 'Sample Alignment 1' on page 8.

During the benchmark alignment process, the National Reporting Standard (NRS) level descriptions as reproduced in Appendix A of the Texas AEL v.4 document were also considered. The NRS has been aligned to the GSE in a separate study (forthcoming). This triangulation between the Texas ESL benchmarks, NRS standards, and GSE allowed for more robust alignment from multiple perspectives.

The GSE ranges presented in the table below indicate where most GSE Learning Objectives for each benchmark level are situated, providing a clear view of the expected progression from beginner to proficient levels.

Texas AEL benchmarks	Texas AELs on GSE	NRS Level	NRS on GSE
Level 1: Beginning Language Ability	12–21	NRS L1: Beginning Literacy	10–22
Level 2: Low Beginning Language Ability	22–30	NRS L2: Beginning Basic	23–30
Level 3: High Beginning Language Ability	31–38	NRS L3: Low Intermediate	31–37
Level 4: Low Intermediate Language Ability	39–45	NRS L4: High Intermediate	38–45
Level 5: High Intermediate Language Ability	46–57	NRS L5: Low Adult Secondary	46–55
Level 6: Advanced Language Ability	58–71	NRS L6: High Adult Secondary	56–70

Table 2: Texas ESL Benchmark Levels aligned to GSE, compared to the NRS–GSE alignment.

In the second step, each content standard subarea statement was aligned to multiple GSE Learning Objectives. Here, a range of suitable objectives was selected across the 10–90 scale to show how each skill develops alongside an increase in proficiency – from a basic level requiring significant scaffolding and support up to mastery. To illustrate this, an example is given in ‘Sample Alignment 2’ on page 10.

For both stages, only the most appropriate GSE learning objectives were included. Where no suitable match was found, the label ‘no descriptor available’ was applied.

Sample Alignment 1: Benchmarks

The following table is an excerpt from “Subarea III.1 – Listening Skills” (p.84). It shows the Benchmark description for “Level 1: Beginning language ability” aligned to GSE Learning Objectives.

Overall statement	Descriptor	GSE Learning Objectives	GSE value
These ELLs are true beginners and can obtain limited meaning from spoken communication. They demonstrate their understanding by using limited responses (e.g., responding with an action such as pointing, drawing, and marking an answer).	1. Respond to spoken commands and show understanding (e.g., nodding and using body language, drawing, and pointing) after listening to brief messages.	Can recognise a few familiar everyday words, if delivered slowly and clearly.	10
		Can use a few simple words to describe objects (e.g. colour, number), if supported by pictures.	18
	2. Listen to spoken language and respond verbally after repeated listening.	Can give very limited personal information using basic fixed expressions.	16
		Can understand basic questions about personal details if addressed slowly and clearly.	21
	3. Listen actively and interpret listening to spoken language utilizing visual props, gestures, and facial expressions to provide a response.	Can recognise a few familiar everyday words, if delivered slowly and clearly.	10
	4. Actively listen and respond to conversations about familiar topics and situations (e.g., such as short phone message or simple dialogue between two people).	Can introduce themselves using a basic phrase (e.g. 'My name's ...').	12
		Can extract the names of people or places from short, simple dialogues, if delivered slowly and clearly.	23

Table 3: An excerpt from the Texas Adult Education and Literacy ESL Content Standards, Subarea III.1 – Listening Skills, showing GSE alignments.

Overall statement	Descriptor	GSE Learning Objectives	GSE value
	5. Interpret spoken communication expressed in a few words and in simple sentences.	Can recognise familiar words in short phrases and sentences spoken slowly and clearly, if supported by pictures.	19
	6. Respond verbally to simple spoken communication in familiar contexts using words, phrases, and simple sentences.	Can give very limited personal information using basic fixed expressions.	16
		Can understand basic questions about personal details if addressed slowly and clearly.	21
	7. Respond with an action (e.g., raise your hand, sit, walk, stop, put pencil down, or look and listen) to basic spoken commands.	Can understand very basic common classroom instructions.	16
	8. Respond verbally to yes/no questions, either/or questions, and other types of questions which require simple answers.	Can understand basic questions about personal details if addressed slowly and clearly.	21
		Can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.	25
	9. Use simple language formulas to ask for clarification (e.g., "Repeat please!" "Say that again?" "What do you mean?" "I don't understand," "Please repeat," "Do you agree?").	Can ask very simply for repetition when they don't understand.	21

Table 3: Continued.

Sample Alignment 2

The following table is an excerpt from “III.4 Writing Skills – Subarea Standard A” (p.105). Based on the GSE ranges in Table 2 on page 6 above, the corresponding benchmark levels have been added for each aligned objective. The table demonstrates that within the same content standard, scaffolding decreases and complexity increases as learners progress.

Overall statement	Subarea standard descriptor	GSE Learning Objectives	GSE value	Benchmark level
The ELL writes in a variety of forms with increasing ease, accuracy, and complexity to effectively address specific purposes and audiences.	A. Fill out a variety of forms, applications, and contracts for everyday life and work purposes by hand or electronically.	Can make selections (e.g. choosing a product, size, colour) in a simple online purchase or application form, provided there is visual support.	19	L1
		Can complete a very simple online purchase or application, providing basic personal information (e.g. name, e-mail or telephone number).	22	L2
		Can complete simple forms with basic personal details.	23	
		Can make simple online transactions (e.g. ordering goods or enrolling in a course) by filling in an online form or questionnaire, providing personal details and confirming acceptance of terms and conditions, declining extra services, etc.	33	L3
		Can complete a form with basic professional information.	35	
		Can complete a simple job application form requiring basic professional information.	42	L4
		Can complete simple forms setting objectives and goals in their job role.	44	

Table 4: An excerpt from the Texas Adult Education and Literacy ESL Content Standards, Subarea III.4 – Writing Skills, showing GSE alignments.

Overall statement	Subarea standard descriptor	GSE Learning Objectives	GSE value	Benchmark level
		Can write a resume/CV with basic information about educational and work history.	45	L5
		Can complete a detailed form requiring travel information (e.g. visa application).	48	
		Can complete a form requiring health information.	54	
		Can engage in online transactions that require an extended exchange of information, provided the interlocutor(s) avoid complex language and are willing to repeat and reformulate when necessary.	55	
		Can engage in online transactions that require an extended exchange of information, provided the interlocutor(s) avoid complex language and are willing to repeat and reformulate when necessary. Can complete a form requiring financial information (e.g. application for a bank account or credit agreement).	56	
		Can complete a self-evaluation form provided during a performance review.	63	L6
		Can write a letter of application with appropriate register, conventions and supporting detail.	65	

Table 4: Continued.

Full alignment documentation is available upon request via our website:

[Educator sales enquiries | Pearson Languages](#)

